



PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

Prior to an examination on the merits, please amend the above-captioned RCE as follows.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claims 25, 29, and 43 as follow:

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25. (Twice amended) A method for steganographically protecting a digital signal comprising the steps of:

*E1*

- a) providing a carrier signal; and
- b) using a random or pseudo-random key to steganographically encode independent information including a digital watermark into the carrier signal.

29. (Twice amended). A method for steganographically protecting a digital signal comprising:

*E2*

- a) providing a carrier signal that has been encoded with independent information;
- b) using a random or pseudo-random key to steganographically decode independent information including a digital watermark from the carrier signal.

43. (Twice amended) The method according to claim 42, further comprising of the step of:

*E3*

- h) using positions within [the] a sample window and a position within the input stream to index random or pseudo-random masks and compute a mapping function to determine encoding positions and encode digital watermark information into the sample window.

Please add new claims 62 and 63, as follows:

*E4*

--62. (new) The method of claim 25, wherein the step of steganographically encoding independent information into the carrier signal causes an imperceptible change in the carrier signal.